

Conservation Officer Comments (Mr Paul Grundy) for planning application 22/00695/HYB

Site address: 23 Wood Street, Hinckley

Proposal: 'Hybrid planning application comprising: Outline application (access, appearance and scale to be considered) for the demolition of existing factory building and erection of a residential building comprising up to 12 residential units; a Full application comprising the change of use of the existing factory building to residential including the addition of an extra storey and comprising 14 residential units'

Date submitted: 11/07/2023

This is a hybrid proposal consisting of and outline application (access, appearance and scale to be considered) for the demolition of an existing factory building and erection of a residential building comprising up to 12 residential units, and a full application for the change of use of an existing factory building to residential including the addition of an extra storey and comprising 14 residential units. The application site is located within the Hinckley Town Centre Conservation Area.

Site context and significance

A Historic Building Survey has been undertaken and this provides a summary of the historical background of the site. The standing buildings on the site were an addition to a pre-existing industrial site on Castle Street which dated from at least 1887. At the turn of the 20th century the site formed part of the Arthur Davenport and Sons hosiery factory complex, the Davenport family being an important local hosiery manufacturer. The pre-existing buildings on Castle Street were demolished in the latter half of the 20th century, leaving four standing buildings facing into Wood Street and Crown and Anchor Yard. Of these a further mid-20th century block towards the western end of the site was demolished as part of the permission reference 07/00443/FUL. The buildings facing into Crown and Anchor Yard have recently been redeveloped and do not form part of the application site.

The site currently consists of two standing buildings. The original T-shaped factory comprises the western block. This was built around 1903 and is of two storeys, constructed in English bond orange brick with a Welsh slate pitched roof. The elevation fronting onto Wood Street forms the head of the T and is of five bays with cast iron framed casement windows set into segmental headed openings. The windows on the first floor are of a similar design but paired. There is a moulded string course at first floor level and a stepped eaves cornice, the string course continues around the western gable end. A six bay wing forming of the shaft of the T stretches back into the site interior.

The second building is the eastern block which is a late 1930s extension added to the eastern gable wall of the original factory. A carriageway was formed to allow access into the rear yard which provides a clear break between the two phases of construction. The extension is of two storeys and 11 bays and faces directly onto Wood Street sited at the back edge of the pavement. The extension has a flat concrete roof concealed behind a parapet wall and has been constructed in a red brick laid in an English bond with vertical decorative brick panels and steel framed windows set in large rectangular openings with concrete cills and lintels.

The rear courtyard facing elevations of the original factory and the extension are simple with no particular architectural adornment, in addition to seeing changes as dictated by their functional operation, such as the insertion of a lift, toilet block and widened openings for access. The open nature of the rear courtyard does allow for views of the rear of the properties on Castle Street which includes the rare survival of a framework knitter's window opening on the first floor of no.124.

Overall, the location of the industrial buildings and their extent along Wood Street, with a uniformity of building lines, building form, roofscape, fenestration and construction materials provide a consistency of character typical of a former hosiery factory complex located within Hinckley, with each of the standing buildings contributing positively to the character and appearance and thus significance of the conservation area. The buildings have been identified as unlisted buildings of local historic or architectural importance (Factories on Wood Street) in the adopted Hinckley Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal (HTCCAA) (2013). For similar reasons these buildings should also be considered to be local heritage assets in their own right (non-designated heritage assets in terms of the National Planning Policy Framework), due to their architectural and illustrative historic interest, rarity as a hosiery complex once common in the town, landmark value and unity as a group of buildings. This assertion is made after assessing the buildings against the Borough Council's adopted selection criteria (2017) for identifying local heritage assets.

One lane (a "jitty"), known as Cross Keys Yard runs along the western boundary of the site and has a dog-leg adjacent to the original factory. The jitty provides an important historic link between the factories on Wood Street and the upper section of Castle Street and is a physical remnant of the historical development of Hinckley when industrial and domestic buildings were sited around them. The jitty is narrow and in part is laid with traditional blue clay pavers, with these characteristics being typical of the wider network of jitties and yards running off main streets located throughout the town centre. Consequently the jitty contributes positively to the character and appearance and thus significance of the conservation area, and is identified as being a feature of special interest within the HTCCAA.

Relevant national and local planning policies and guidance

Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides the national policy on conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Paragraph 197 states that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- b) The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- c) The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Paragraphs 199-202 require great weight to be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets when considering the impact of a proposed development on its significance, for any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset to

have clear and convincing justification, and for that harm to be weighed against the public benefits of a proposal.

Paragraph 203 states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably (paragraph 206).

Policies DM11 and DM12 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD (SADMP) seek to protect and enhance the historic environment and heritage assets. Policy DM11 states that the Borough Council will protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment throughout the borough. This will be done through the careful management of development that might adversely impact both designated and non-designated heritage assets. All development proposals which have the potential to affect a heritage asset or its setting will be required to demonstrate:

- a) An understanding of the significance of the heritage asset and its setting, and
- b) The impact of the proposal on the significance of the asset and its setting, including measures to minimise or avoid these impacts; and
- c) How the benefits of the proposal will outweigh any harm caused
- d) Any impact on archaeology in line with Policy DM13

Policy DM12 requires all development proposals to accord with Policy DM10: Development and Design. Development proposals should ensure the significance of a conservation area is preserved and enhanced through the consideration and inclusion of important features (as identified in Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans). Policy DM12 also states that development proposals should make every effort to retain the significance of locally listed heritage assets.

General guidance and an assessment of the character and appearance of the Hinckley Town Centre are contained within the HTCCAA. Guidance and a number of potential means of enhancing the character and appearance of the site provided in the Hinckley Town Centre Conservation Area Management Plan (2013).

In determining applications, paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Policy DM11 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (SADMP) DPD requires an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. Paragraph 195 of the NPPF also requires local planning authorities to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal, including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset. That required assessment has been undertaken in the body of these comments. The Historic Building Survey that has been prepared to accompany the application identifies the significance of affected heritage assets; in my opinion this document is proportionate and meets the requirements of paragraph 194 of the NPPF and Policy DM11 of the SADMP.

The proposal

The proposal seeks to end the existing employment uses on the site and redevelop it to provide a level of residential accommodation. A concept site layout and street elevation has been submitted which indicate the residential accommodation would be provided in two separate block across the site. The western section of the site would consist of a three storey building of a T-shaped plan (referred to hereon as block A) replacing the original factory and occupying approximately the same footprint as the existing frontage range and a slightly reduced footprint as the existing perpendicular rear range. The western elevation of this block would also face into the Cross Keys Yard jitty. Outline details of the appearance and scale of block A have been provided.

The eastern section of the site would comprise of the conversion of the existing 1930s two storey building into apartments with the addition of a flat roofed penthouse storey and stairwell to the rear elevation (this is referred to hereon as block B). The current link between the original factory and the extension would be removed with vehicular access to parking in the rear yard in between block A and block B. Full details of the appearance, scale and layout of the block B have been provided.

Impact of the proposal on significance of heritage assets

The proposal seeks to demolish the whole of the original 1903 factory. Given the largely positive contribution this building makes to the conservation area its loss is considered to have an adverse impact upon the significance of the conservation area and the asset itself as a local heritage asset.

The plans allow for a detailed assessment of most planning matters, other than layout of block A and landscaping for the wider site being indicative. In terms of access the position of the existing vehicular access is maintained with parking largely being retained within a rear courtyard, reflective of the current site circumstances. Cross Key Yard jitty is retained as a pedestrian access from Castle Street and Wood Street and will be used for access to some of block A, adding some activity back to this historic route.

The concept site layout plan confirms that block A reflects the siting of previous historical industrial and domestic built form, and alongside the conversion of block B this ensures the development will maintain a uniformity of building line and maintain the strong presence of buildings within the street scene with them being located at the back edge of the pavement.

The prevalent building scale on the site is of buildings of two storeys in height, although this scale does feel greater than the surrounding domestic development of two storeys due to the taller floors of these functional industrial buildings. The redevelopment does increase the scale and mass of development, particular at the site frontage on Wood Street. However, block A is to be rebuilt at a three storey domestic rather than industrial scale so the increase in the height of the building is minimal, and due to the set back and flat roof form of the additional floor for block B this reduces its visual impact and is not considered to detract from the form of the original 1930s building or have an overbearing impact upon the wider area. The proposed stairwell to the rear elevation block B is subservient in scale to the main building.

Block A is proposed to be rebuilt in matching materials with the architectural style, proportion & details of the original building replicated. A requested additional detail is confirming that the red/orange brick for the construction of block A be laid in an

English bond as per the original building; this could be secured via a planning condition.

The materials for the facing walls and flat roof penthouse storey on block B are to be cladding with a pale grey colour and the rear stairwell extension to the rear is to be clad in timber with clear glazing curtain walling to the sides. These would be contemporary styled finishes that are considered to complement the retained brick finish of the original factory. The windows proposed to serve the penthouse storey and generally positioned to ensure a rhythm and consistency of appearance with the windows on the ground and first floors below. The existing steel windows are in a relatively poor conditions so are proposed to be replaced with new windows of a style and proportions to match the existing, respecting the horizontal emphasis of industrial style steel windows from the 1930s architectural period. Any replacement windows upon both blocks would be expected to be of a traditional or similar material, such as steel or aluminium.

For the above reasons the access, layout (in terms of the siting of the blocks and retention of the Cross Keys Yard jitty) and scale of the proposed redevelopment is considered to have no adverse impact upon affected heritage assets. The appearance of the proposed redevelopment could be acceptable subject to the submission of further details which can be secured via a planning condition. A justification has been submitted with the proposal demonstrating the reasons for the continued partial vacancy of the original factory and the practical difficulties of its conversion. The continued state of disrepair with the boarding up of the windows is also considered to have a detrimental impact on the appearance of the area so bringing the building back into use will provide an enhancement to the character of the area; such a measure is identified within the Hinckley Town Centre Conservation Area Management Plan. The total loss of the original factory remains harmful; however, its loss is mitigated to a certain degree by the recording of its significance as part of the Historic Building Survey and the siting, scale and appearance (subject to the submission of further details) of the proposed block A very closely replicating its existing characteristics.

Summary and conclusion

The loss of the original factory has an adverse impact upon the character and appearance of the conservation area causing harm to this designated heritage asset. The level of harm upon the conservation area is considered to be less than substantial. As a justification has been provided for its loss and its significance has been recorded, in addition to the limited impact on the conservation area as a whole, the level of harm is considered to be towards the lower end of the spectrum of less than substantial harm.

The access, layout, scale and appearance (subject to conditions) of the proposed redevelopment across the site is considered acceptable and particular aspects of the proposal provide an enhancement to the character of the area. These are heritage benefits, which accompanied with any additional non-heritage public benefits should be weighed against the harm caused as per paragraph 202 of the NPPF and Policy DM11 of the SADMP. The ultimate conclusion of this balancing exercise is one for the decision-taker, but if it comes out in favour of the proposal it will comply with policies DM11 and DM12 of the SADMP, section 16 of the NPPF and the statutory duty of Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Although a reserved matter, the conceptual site layout identifies opportunities for appropriate landscaping including within the site interior, on the corner of Wood

Street and Priory Walk and along and within the vicinity of Cross Keys Yard which could realise further opportunities for enhancement identified within the Conservation Area Management Plan. For any application seeking approval of this reserved matter these characteristics must be retained to ensure the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness is achieved.

The redevelopment proposal provides a number of benefits towards achieving the objectives of sustainable development (see paragraph 8 of the NPPF), including some short term employment during the construction of the redevelopment, a number of dwellings to meet the borough's housing supply and the use of local services by future occupants. Previous efforts have been made towards the retention of the original 1903 factory but its conversion remains unviable, with its loss mitigated to a degree by the programme of recording its significance and block A, its proposed replacement, closely reflecting its form, siting, scale and appearance (the latter subject to the submission of further details). The conversion of the 1930s extension is considered to retain the significance of this part of the factory complex. Therefore, taking the above into account and the balanced approach required by paragraph 203 of the NPPF in my opinion the proposal is not considered to have an unacceptable impact upon the local heritage asset identified as Factories on Wood Street, and therefore this element of the proposal complies with policies DM11 and DM12 of the SADMP and section 16 of the NPPF. The ultimate conclusion of the balancing exercise is one for the decision-taker however.

Should the application be approved, I would request that the following planning conditions are utilised (please reword as required):

No development above foundation level shall commence on site until representative samples and/or details of the materials and architectural detailing to be used on the buildings hereby permitted have been deposited with and approved in writing by the local planning authority, and the scheme shall be implemented in accordance with those approved details. The details shall include:-

- Brick for new building (including material, colour and bond)
- Roof tile for the new building (including material and colour)
- Cladding for the building to be converted (including material, finish and colour)
- Windows and doors for both buildings (including style, specification, frame material, finish, colour, reveal, cill and header treatments)
- Rainwater goods for both buildings (including style, specification, frame and colour)

Reason: To ensure that the development has a satisfactory appearance in the interests of visual amenity and to preserve the significance of the Hinckley Town Centre Conservation Area in accordance with Policies DM10, DM11 and DM12 of the adopted Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (2016), section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

No demolition works shall commence until a contract has been let to carry out the building operations permitted under this permission (or any superseding consent as first agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority) has been made.

Reason: To avoid premature demolition which would be harmful to the character and appearance of the Hinckley Town Centre Conservation Area and to safeguard the

local environment and in accordance with the aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework and in accordance with Policies DM11 and DM12 of the adopted Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (2016).